



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

March 10, 2006

News Release

ICE arrests 375 gang members & associates in two-week enforcement action
20 arrested in the San Antonio under ICE's "Community Shield" anti-gang crackdown

SAN ANTONIO – Federal agents with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office here, in partnership with local and federal law enforcement, arrested 20 street gang members and associates during a two-week enforcement action that culminated yesterday. Nationwide, a total of 375 gang members and associates in 23 states were arrested.

The arrests are the latest under the auspices of "Operation Community Shield," a comprehensive initiative launched by ICE roughly one year ago to disrupt and dismantle transnational, violent street gangs. Operation Community Shield represents the first time the federal government has used immigration and customs authorities in a combined, national campaign against criminal street gangs in the United States.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff announced the results at a press conference today with ICE Assistant Secretary Julie Myers; Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Emilio Gonzalez; Assistant Director of Field Operations at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Michael Bouchard, First Assistant Chief of the Dallas Police Department David O'Neal Brown, and Deputy Assistant Director of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division Deborah Pierce.

In the past year, ICE has conducted several targeted enforcement actions under Operation Community Shield, including the latest one. In total, these efforts have resulted in the arrest of 2,388 members of 239 different gangs and the seizure of 117 firearms. Fifty-one of those arrested were gang leaders. Roughly 922 of those arrested were from the street gang Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). Those arrested under Operation Community Shield are prosecuted criminally or removed from the United States through immigration proceedings. To date, 533 have been charged criminally, while 1,855 have been hit with administrative immigration charges.

In the latest enforcement action that began on Feb. 24, 2006, ICE San Antonio teamed up with the San Antonio Police Department Gang Unit; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; the United States Marshals and the San Antonio Division of the United States Attorney's office.

ICE offices nationally conducted other arrests throughout the United States, including: Dallas (44), San Diego (41), Washington, D.C. (22), Miami (22), and Raleigh, N.C. (19). Gang members were also arrested in locations such as Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Des Moines, Iowa; and Springfield, Missouri. Those arrested included members of MS-13, Sureños, 18th Street Gang, Latin Kings, Bloods, Crips, Armenian Power, Street Thug Criminals, Brown Pride, Asian Dragon Family, Avenue Assassins, Spanish Gangster Disciples, Big Time Killers and Hermanos Pistoleros Latinos.

More than 260 of the 375 individuals arrested in the latest action have past criminal records, most of them violent. ICE agents arrested 73 of the individuals on new criminal charges ranging from drug and firearms violations to charges of re-entering the country after deportation. The rest have been accused of administrative immigration violations and placed into deportation proceedings.

Those arrested by the San Antonio ICE office include:

- **Convicted murderer and gang member whose son is charged with shooting an ICE agent.**

On March 3, ICE agents in South Texas arrested Juan Eladio Villareal-Saenza, a convicted murderer and member of the Hermanos Pistoleros Latinos gang, on criminal charges of re-entry after deportation. The same day, ICE agents and U.S. Marshals deputies arrested his son, Leobardo Villareal, who was wanted on federal charges of shooting a McAllen ICE agent in May 2005, escaping from federal custody, and federal drug violations. Villareal escaped in Sept. 2005 from the McAllen Medical Center, where he allegedly carjacked a mother and her children to flee. He was later featured on "America's Most Wanted."

- **Gang member who barricaded himself in his house.**

On Feb. 25, Juan de Dios Santana-Sanchez, 34, barricaded himself in his house as federal agents approached. After hours of negotiating, Santana-Sanchez, a member of the Mexican Mafia gang, surrendered himself to authorities and was arrested. ICE agents determined that Santana-Sanchez had entered the country illegally.

"The lawlessness that these violent gangs propagate presents a grave threat to public safety," said Homeland Security Michael Chertoff. "We are meeting their victimization of the innocent with hard-hitting enforcement actions that lead to criminal prosecutions and deportations. Operation Community Shield embodies the power behind law enforcement partnerships, at all levels, to share information and combat these intolerable criminal elements."

"ICE will aggressively pursue and arrest these violent gang members and their associates who commit crimes, terrorize our communities, and pose a serious threat to public safety," said ICE deputy special agent-in-charge Jerry Robinette. "ICE will use its unique law enforcement resources to target violent gang members, and ultimately remove them from the country to help keep our communities safe."

The 20 arrested in San Antonio are all Mexican nationals. Santana-Sanchez and 23-year-old Sergio Cerda-Colunga have been deported. Cerda-Colunga, a member of the Latin Kings, had re-entered

the U.S. after deportation. The remaining 18 have been charged criminally or with administrative immigration violations.

About Operation Community Shield:

Operation Community Shield was launched in February 2005 after a threat assessment by ICE field offices identified MS-13 as one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the country. The assessment found that most of these gang members were foreign-born; in the United States illegally; had prior criminal convictions; and/or were involved in crimes that made them subject to ICE's broad immigration and customs authorities.

ICE kicked off Operation Community Shield with an enforcement action that resulted in the arrest of more than 100 members of MS-13. In the months that followed, ICE agents nationwide joined ranks and continued targeting MS-13 members in their jurisdictions. In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members.

Since that time, ICE has been targeting all violent gang members nationwide by using its administrative immigration authorities to detain and remove illegal alien gang members from the country and by using its criminal authorities to arrest and prosecute gang members involved in criminal activities.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.